WE CLAIM:

1. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a theater including a representation associated with a person, the representation providing a choice of visual presence; and

a player for presenting the theater at a remote location.

2. A rich media theater controller, comprising:

a theater window having a background presentation scene, and

a presentation control for selecting a character for a presentation in the theater, wherein the character presentation may be selected from an avatar, a blue screen cutout of the character, or a plain video presentation.

3. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a theater window having a representation associated with a person, the theater having a media target onto which the person may direct media; and

a player for presenting the theater window to a remote location.

4. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 3, wherein the person may drop a predetermined theater into the theater window to generate a custom theater window.

5. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 3, wherein the person may drop an avatar into the theater window to generate an avatar image within the stage.

6. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 3, wherein the theater includes a stage having a plurality of media targets, and rich media may be dropped on the stage for display in the media targets.

7. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 6, wherein media dropped onto the stage is presented in the first available media target.

5   8. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 6, wherein a still image is dropped onto a particular media target and the still image is shown presented in the particular media target.

9. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 6, wherein a video

10 stream is dropped onto a particular media target and the video stream is shown presented in the particular media target.

10. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 6, wherein audio media dropped on the stage is played by the system.

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11. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a theater having a background presentation scene with rich media targets and having an avatar representation associated with a person, the avatar representation being driven by visual sensing of the person, and

20   a player for presenting the theater at a remote location.

12. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 11, wherein the avatar representation may have selectable behaviors

25   13. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 11, wherein the visual sensing is performed by a sensor using wavelet-based feature tracking.

14. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 13, wherein the tracking sensor may be trained with varying expressions of the person.

15. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 11, further

5   comprising a module that allows construction of a personalized avatar representation which is based on an image of the person.

16. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a theater including a visual representation associated with a person; and

10   a communicator for presenting the theater to a remote location using a rich media messaging directory service.

17. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a theater for providing rich media presentations which include a visual

15   representation associated with a person; and

an online directory for locating users capable of communicating with rich media presentations.

18. A rich media client as defined in claim 17, wherein the directory includes a

20   user's personalized address book

19. A rich media client as defined in claim 17, wherein the directory includes a listing of users.

25   20. A rich media client as defined in claim 17, wherein the directory includes a rich media card having a user's rich media communication parameters for communicating with the user.

21. A rich media client as defined in claim 20, wherein the rich media card of a user may be transmitted to another user.

22. A rich media client as defined in claim 20, wherein a user's rich media card may be requested by another user.

23. A rich media client as defined in claim 17, wherein the directory includes user blocking wherein a user may block rich media communications from selected other users.

24. A rich media communication system, comprising a status window indicating rich media communications received, the user's visibility to other users, the user's availability to other users, and the user's automatic response to rich media communication messages from other users.

25. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a rich media client for communicating rich media communications between users, and

a directory for organizing rich media communication users into user defined communities.

26. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 25, wherein the communities are organized in hierarchical levels.

27. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 26, wherein predetermined hierarchical levels are associated with a user who acts as a moderator for the level.

28. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 27, wherein the moderator may control access to the associated level including blocking of a particular user accessing the room.

5   29. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 27, wherein the hierarchical levels comprise cities, where the cities include neighborhoods, the neighborhoods include houses, and the houses have rooms.

30. A rich media communication system, comprising:

10   a theater window having a representation associated with a person, the theater window having a stage onto which the person may direct rich media; and

a client for publishing the theater window to a rich media website.

31. A rich media communication system, comprising a message center having a 15 message reader, the message reader having a text message window and a rich media presentation window, wherein the rich media window may be toggled off such that a user may first read only the text message before requesting transmission of a rich media message for presentation in the presentation window.

20   32. A rich media communication system, comprising a monitor window that shows, to a person creating a rich media presentation, a live video image of the person, a blue screen cutout of the person, or a live video image of the person with sensing control points overlaid on the person's image to show feature tracking performance.

25   33. A rich media communication system, comprising:

a server infrastructure for providing web hosting, message hosting and communication services;

at least one content client that includes an authoring tool for generating a rich media communication; and

a plurality of communicator clients for displaying, using the server infrastructure, the rich media communication at remote locations.

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34. A rich media communication system as defined in claim 33, wherein the communicator client includes a message center, a renderer, and an encoder.

35. A method for generating and rendering rich media communications,

10 comprising:

receiving media elements from a plurality of media sources and generating a multiplexed rich media communication bit stream;

transmitting the bit stream to a receiver;

decomposing the bit stream into rich media elements; and

15 rendering the rich media elements to generate a rich media theater.

36. A method for rich media communication, comprising:

providing a theater window having a background presentation scene; and

selecting a character for a presentation in the theater, wherein the character

20 presentation may be selected from an avatar, a blue screen cutout of the character, or a plain video presentation.

37. A method for rich media communication, comprising:

providing a theater window having a representation associated with a person;

25 providing a media target in the theater window onto which the person may direct media; and

presenting the theater window to a remote location.

38. A method for rich media communication, comprising:

providing a theater having a background presentation scene with rich media targets;

generating in the theater an avatar representation associated with a person;

driving the avatar representation by visual sensing of the person; and

presenting the theater including the avatar representation at a remote location.

39. A method for rich media communication, comprising:

providing a theater including a visual representation associated with a person; and

presenting the theater to a remote location using a rich media messaging directory service.

40. A method for rich media communication, comprising:

providing rich media presentations which include a visual representation associated with a person; and

locating users capable of communicating with the rich media presentations using an online directory.

41. A method of rich media communication, comprising:

providing a theater window having a representation associated with a person, the theater window having a stage onto which the person may direct rich media; and

publishing the theater window to a rich media website.